

1 August 2025

# Ultra Low-Cost Solar PV R&D Funding Round Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Version 2



Australian Government  
Australian Renewable  
Energy Agency

**ARENA**

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## Version history

### Research, Development and Commercialisation Program: Ultra Low-Cost Solar PV R&D Funding Round Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Version Date	Description	Changes since last version
16 July 2025	v 1.0 ULCS FAQs	Not applicable
1 August 2025	V 2.0 ULCS FAQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Added new categories</li><li>• Added index of questions</li><li>• Added new FAQs from information webinars 1 &amp; 2</li></ul>



# 1. Applicants

## 1.1 Can my organisation apply for funding?

To be eligible for funding, your organisation must at the time of EOI submission be either:

- an Australian entity with a valid Australian Company Number (ACN) and Australian Business Number (ABN) or
- an eligible Australian research institution as set out below:
  - an Australian university;
  - the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO);
  - the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), including Data61;
  - the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS);
  - the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO);
  - Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs);
  - the National Measurement Institute (NMI); or
  - Australian Research Council (ARC) Centres of Excellence.

## 1.2 Are lead Applicants expected to provide cash?

Applicants can provide cash and/or in-kind contributions, and should consider what is most appropriate to achieve the desired Project outcomes and the value of proposed contributions rather than just the dollar figure allocated. Please refer to 6.7 below for further details on co-investment.

## 1.3 Can the lead Applicant change during Project delivery?

Yes. It may be appropriate for the lead Applicant to be substituted by a Project Partner over the delivery of the Project (e.g. between research and commercialisation stages) and ARENA may consider a request to change the lead Applicant on a case-by-case basis. You should contact your ARENA contract manager in the first instance to discuss any proposed changes during Project delivery.

## 1.4 Can an Applicant submit more than one Proposal or be a member of more than one project team?

There is no limit to the number of Proposals that can be submitted by an Applicant. However, if you intend to be part of more than one Proposal you must be able to justify that you will have, or be able to allocate, sufficient time and resources to all of the Proposals should they each be successful in receiving ARENA funding. Additionally, each Proposal should be self-contained. Although ARENA may assess Proposals using a portfolio approach, each Proposal will be assessed individually on its merits before portfolio consideration and the information from one Proposal will not be used to assess another Proposal.

## 1.5 Does ARENA support collaboration between Australian universities?

ARENA encourages collaboration. This includes collaboration between universities as well as between universities, industry and international partners. Due to the competitive nature of the Funding Round, ARENA cannot facilitate collaboration between Applicants.

### **1.6 Are international research institutions eligible for funding?**

International research institutions are not eligible to apply directly for funding as the lead Applicant. They may be a partner in a Project with Australian research institutions, universities or companies, however, the majority of the Project must take place in Australia and no more than 10 percent of the total Project budget may be spent overseas (with the exception of the purchase or use of equipment and materials). Any overseas spending above this cap can only occur with prior written approval from ARENA at its absolute discretion. Please confirm in your Application form if you will need to go above the cap because there are activities that cannot be performed in Australia.

### **1.7 Does ARENA require Applicants to have an industry partner to be eligible for funding?**

It is not essential to have an industry partner. Each Proposal will be assessed on its merit against all Merit Criteria as set out in Part 4 (Merit Criteria) of the Research, Development and Commercialisation Program Guidelines (Program Guidelines) and Section 6 (Clarification of Merit Criteria) of the Funding Round Announcement, including alignment to the Funding Round Objectives. However, Proposals that can demonstrate research with strong potential for commercialisation are likely to be considered of higher merit.

### **1.8 Will Proposals that include industry partners be considered higher merit?**

ARENA will assess the capability and capacity of the lead Applicant and any Project Partners under Merit Criterion B (Applicant Capability and Capacity). For example, ARENA will consider whether the partner or Applicant has the necessary skills or expertise to contribute meaningfully to the Project. ARENA will also consider whether this the Project is financially viable (including via cash and/or in-kind contributions) under Merit Criterion D (Financial Viability and Co-Funding Commitment). Due to the emphasis on commercialisation and the facilitation of collaboration between research and industry groups, Proposals that include and benefit from strong industry partner support are likely to be considered of higher merit.

### **1.9 Can industry partners be from overseas**

Yes. However, to be eligible for funding, the majority of the Project must take place in Australia and no more than 10 percent of the Project budget can be spent overseas, unless it relates to the purchase of equipment and materials. Please confirm in your Application form if you will need to go above the cap because there are activities that cannot be performed in Australia.

### **1.10 Is there a limit to Ph.D. student involvement in the Project?**

No. The capability and capacity of the Team conducting the Project is assessed under Merit Criterion B (Applicant Capability and Capacity). Applicants should include team members and skill sets they consider appropriate to deliver the Project. The budget, including salaries, is also assessed under Merit Criterion D (Financial Viability and Co-Funding Commitment). The full time equivalent (FTE) allocated to each team member must be apportioned to the Project and is assessed under Merit Criterion B (Applicant Capability and Capacity).



### **1.11 Can my organisation apply for ARENA funding in addition to other grant or government funding?**

Yes, an organisation can apply for ARENA funding in addition to other grant or government funding (pending or received). However, all sources of funds (or potential funds) will need to be included in your Application. ARENA typically funds no more than 50 per cent of a Project cost and the maximum ARENA Grant to any individual Project cannot exceed \$10 million for the Funding Round. Your Proposal should clearly outline why funding from ARENA is required and ensure that the same activities are not being funded by both the ARENA Grant and other government/grant funding.

### **1.12 For a startup entity, is a fixed office location necessary? Are there requirements for the number of employees? Are part-time employees allowed?**

While there are no specific requirements for office location, the number of employees or the type of employee, under Merit Criteria B you need to demonstrate sufficient capacity and capability to undertake the Project so please take this into consideration.

### **1.13 At the time of applying, how long should a start-up entity have been established?**

If the start-up entity meets the definition of an eligible entity for this Round, there is no minimum establishment period required. Applicants must demonstrate capability and capacity to deliver the Project.

### **1.14 Can Applicants with a Project that potentially spans multiple ARENA programs apply for more than 1 program grant concurrently?**

Yes, but each Application must be distinct and not duplicate funding for the same activities. You should note in your Application whether you are intending to apply for multiple programs or have existing related projects on foot.

## **2. Collaboration and Partners**

### **2.1 Does the Project need Partner organisations and industry partners? Do they need to provide cash?**

Partner organisations are not mandatory, but are encouraged. Applicants may partner with industry partners to enhance capability or capacity. Proposals that include and benefit from strong industry partner support are likely to be considered of higher merit. Partner organisations and industry partners may contribute cash or in-kind support, and your Application needs to demonstrate the level and appropriateness of the contributions.

### **2.2 What can ARENA do to help connect me to potential partners?**

ARENA cannot facilitate collaboration between Applicants as this is a competitive round. Applicants are encouraged to form partnerships independently.



### **2.3 Could you please explain the IP arrangement if both university and company are part of the Project?**

Applicants must have ownership of, access to, or beneficial use of any intellectual property (IP) necessary to carry out the project. The IP arrangements between the university and the company is determined by these two parties. ARENA will not be involved in direct IP arrangement discussions between the university and the company. Evidence of IP arrangements may be requested which is likely at the Full Application or contract negotiation stages.

### **2.4 What kind of industry partners does ARENA want? Is there a preference for international or domestic industry partners?**

While ARENA does not have a preference for location or kind of industry partner. We encourage Applicants to consider the benefits to Australia as well as what will maximise Project outcomes and impact to determine what is most appropriate in their circumstance.

### **2.5 Can the industry partner lead the project?**

Yes, ARENA welcomes applications from innovative businesses including startups, industry players and existing businesses. Please refer to the Eligibility Criteria for the specific requirements.

### **2.6 What level of co-investment from industry partner is expected or preferred?**

Industry partners can provide cash and/or in-kind contributions. The key is to consider what is most appropriate to achieve the desired Project outcomes and the value of proposed contributions rather than just the dollar figure allocated.

## **3. Projects**

### **3.1 Is the RDC Program the same as TRAC Program?**

Yes, the Transformative Research Acceleration Commercialisation (TRAC) Program has been renamed as Research, Development and Commercialisation (RDC) Program. There are minor updates to the Program Guidelines, but the Program Objectives remain the same. The first three Funding Rounds were delivered under TRAC. The first three being Ultra Low-Cost Solar, (ULCS), Hydrogen, and Iron and Steel. This and this and future Rounds will be delivered under RDC.

### **3.2 What are the Streams and Focus Areas for this Funding Round?**

For a Project to be eligible for funding it must address one of the Streams of the Funding Round:

- Stream 1: Cells and modules; or
- Stream 2: Balance of system, and Operations and Maintenance.

Each Stream has Focus Areas and objectives in the table below. Projects must accelerate the achievement of one or more Focus Areas within the relevant Stream.



## Stream 1 (Cells and modules) Focus Areas and objectives\*

Focus Area	Objective
<b>Increase efficiency</b>	Develop large sized cells for next generation solar modules at over 30% module efficiency.
<b>Reduce cost</b>	Reduce system cost to below 30 cents per watt.
<b>Improve stability</b>	Improve stability of cells and modules for utility-scale solar farms to meet a minimum asset life of 30 years**, with longer expected asset operating lifetimes.

\* Applicants in Stream 1 (Cells and Modules) must nominate a primary Focus Area in the Application and must also consider other Focus Areas (e.g. a Project focused on improved cell efficiency without considering cost and stability would not be considered high merit).

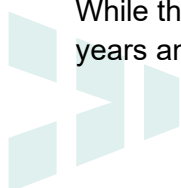
\*\* Projects are expected to target degradation levels in line with the International Technology Roadmap for Photovoltaics (ITRPV) – currently in its 16th Edition (2025).

## Stream 2: (Balance of Systems, and Operations and Maintenance) Focus Areas and objectives

Focus Area	Objective
<b>Reduce Balance of System (BoS), deployment cost</b>	Cost reductions for utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) deployment toward 30 cents per watt. Achieving this is expected to require novel approaches for constructing solar farms including simplifying mounting designs, prefabrication and / or improved installation (e.g. automation through AI and Robotics), and other BoS design innovations (e.g. larger module sizes).
<b>Reduce Operations &amp; Maintenance (O&amp;M) costs</b>	Research and commercialisation of innovation to reduce O&M costs, risks and complexity.
<b>Other Levelised Cost of Energy (LCOE) reduction and / or innovation to increase yield</b>	Innovative solar PV system design to uplift solar farm performance, reduce cost and increase market adoption of BoS innovation.

### 3.3 What is the recommended duration for the Project, including the R&D and commercialisation stages, and are there any restrictions on the start and end dates?

While the duration for each stage of the Project is flexible, the overall Project period must not exceed 5 years and must encompass both the R&D and commercialisation stages. The earliest possible start date





is after the Funding Agreement execution, which is expected to be from July 2026. There is some flexibility to move this earlier due to funding negotiations and ARENA's internal processes.

### **3.4 What if my Project covers more than one Stream?**

Although Projects may contribute to more than one Stream, Applicants are required to select only one (the most relevant) Stream to be addressed under Merit Criteria A (Contribution to the Program Outcomes and Round Objectives).

### **3.5 Will ARENA consider one Stream more favourably than another?**

Both Streams are equally important and ARENA Projects in each Stream will only be assessed alongside other Projects within the same Stream. This provides a fairer playing field as the Funding Round supports Projects across the whole solar PV value chain. However, ARENA reserves the right to reallocate funding from one Stream to the other if it considers that there are insufficient high merit Proposals in either Stream, and a Project may contribute to the other Stream. For example, if there are more high merit Projects in Stream 1 (Cells and Modules) than Stream 2 (Balance of Systems, and Operations and Maintenance), ARENA may shift some of the funding allocated to Stream 1 (Cells and Modules) to support more high merit Projects.

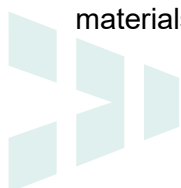
### **3.6 What type of Projects are eligible?**

As detailed in the Part 3 (Eligibility Criteria) of the Program Guidelines and Section 4 (Scope of Activity) of the Funding Round Announcement, this Round is open to Projects that:

- meet all Eligibility Criteria as outlined in Part 3 (Eligibility Criteria) of the Program Guidelines;
- demonstrate alignment with at least one Focus Area under the relevant Stream;
- do not involve end-of-life management or solar PV recycling, or development of Solar PV Products as set out in Section 4 (Scope of Activity) of the Funding Round Announcement;
- are focused on Ultra Low-Cost Solar PV (as defined in the Funding Round Announcement);
- include an ARENA grant request of least \$3.5 million for Stream 1 (Cells and Modules) and at least \$2.0 million for Stream 2 (Balance of Systems, and Operations and Maintenance) Applications;
- do not exceed an ARENA Grant of \$10 million;
- do not exceed a Project term of five years;
- include a Research and Development (R&D) stage and a commercialisation stage;
- include a minimum TRL of 3 (achieved) at time of Expression of Interest (EOI) and TRL progression beyond its starting TRL during the Project; and
- has a Budget of no more than 50 per cent of the total ARENA Grant for commercialisation activities, to a limit of \$4.0 million.

### **3.7 What eligible R&D activities are included in this Funding Round?**

As detailed in Eligibility Criterion B (Eligible Project) of the Program Guidelines, **R&D activities** are characterised by their originality, with the primary objective of the works being investigation, the outcomes of which will be new knowledge and may lead to practical applications, new improved materials, products, processes or services.



**R&D includes** specialised scientific and technical information services, postgraduate research, and the design, construction and testing of prototypes (pilot plants where new data is evaluated).

**R&D does not include:** basic or blue-sky research (Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 1-2), the implementation of innovations (including trial production and copying prototypes), education and training of students (except postgraduate research), maintenance of national and international standards, feasibility studies, business models or marketing and market studies (excluding activities necessary to progress commercialisations of the technology or innovation).

### **3.8 What is commercialisation and what do commercialisation activities include?**

Commercialisation is the process of bringing new products or services to market. Projects that leap from concept to commercial-scale demonstration often face major hurdles—such as securing private co-investment, managing unexpected costs, and adapting to shifting market conditions that undermine original goals.

The Research, Development and Commercialisation (RDC) Program supports early-stage commercialisation of core research, encouraging a more transformative approach to R&D investment. Activities that enhance a technology's commercial readiness—such as business development, technical demonstrations, or integration into existing processes—are considered commercialisation efforts.

### **3.9 What should be included in my commercialisation plan?**

At the EOI stage, the commercialisation plan should include a preliminary high-level plan ranging from 2 to 3 pages in length as an attachment under “Other relevant documents optional” in ARENA's online application portal (ARENANet). The commercialisation plan should describe your Project's overall value proposition, proposed business model, addressable market size and target customers, funding needs and financial strategy, and proposed timeframe to commercialisation and key milestones.

### **3.10 What is the ‘stage-gate’ mechanism and when will this be triggered?**

In line with its transformative approach and focus on commercialisation, Projects will be structured in two stages: R&D and commercialisation. A stage-gate mechanism will assess whether a Project is ready to transition from the R&D stage to commercialisation stage.

Before this transition, ARENA will evaluate the proposed technology's value and viability. If a Project does not pass the stage-gate—at ARENA's discretion—it will be terminated, and any allocated commercialisation funding will be returned. ARENA may also propose a variation to the Funding Agreement as per ARENA's [variation policy](#), including a potential reduction in commercialisation funding.

### **3.11 What if my Project contains technologies that are at different TRLs?**

You should consider the starting TRL of the core technology/solution being developed. If you are conducting early-stage research based on commercial technologies in order to make technology advancements to these products, please note this in your Application.



### **3.12 What does cost-effectiveness mean and how can I compare my Project to current mass-market solar PV technologies?**

Cost-effectiveness should take into consideration the cost of generation over the lifetime of a solar panel. This might include parameters such as the cost of manufacture, efficiency and stability in a real-world environment.

Applicants should consider how their Project aims to improve on the performance of existing, mass-market technologies by referencing the ITRPV.

### **3.13 Should all Proposals reference the ITRPV Report?**

No. Applicants should only reference the ITRPV if the primary Focus Area is either Reduce cost or Improve Stability, both of which are under Stream 1 (Cells and Modules). In such Proposals, the figures in the ITRPV Report are to be used as a benchmark for comparison. If your Proposal is focused on a different area, then you do not need to reference the ITRPV Report.

### **3.14 Can the R&D stage be shorter than the commercialisation stage?**

Yes. The R&D stage should be designed as needed to meet the requirements of progressing to commercialisation stage. The Funding Round has been designed to enable flexibility in the stage-gate mechanism to enable Projects to achieve a pathway to commercialisation sooner. Please note the ARENA funding towards commercialisation activities must be no more than \$4 million and 50% of total ARENA Funding requested.

### **3.15 How does ARENA calculate Levelised Cost of Energy?**

ARENA calculates LCOE based on the industry-accepted calculation using a discount rate of 6% (pre-tax). Given that different systems will have different cost characteristics, lifetime generation, and asset lives, ARENA is not prescriptive on the other assumptions that should apply to the calculation of LCOE. Any assumptions used to calculate LCOE should be included as part of your Application.

### **3.16 Can future commercialisation activities be outside of Australia?**

Commercialisation may occur outside of Australia, but the majority of Project activities must take place in Australia.

### **3.17 What is the likely commencement date for Projects?**

The Commencement date for Projects is to occur after the Funding Agreement has been executed, which is estimated to be around July 2026. There is some, albeit limited flexibility to move this earlier due to funding negotiations and ARENA's internal processes.

### **3.18 Are there any restrictions on the start and end dates of Projects, and what is the likely commencement date?**

The maximum Project length is 5 years, with the earliest possible start date being after the Funding Agreement execution, which is expected to be from 1 July 2026. At the EOI stage an estimated start date after July 2026 will be accepted, acknowledging that the exact Project start date may be difficult to forecast.



### **3.19 Does the final commercialisation plan have to involve products or will services be acceptable?**

Yes. The final commercialisation can involve either / or products and services. Applicants should consider what is the most appropriate business model to achieve their commercialisation goals.

### **3.20 Is this Round focusing on technologies that have commercial potential?**

Yes. This Round is designed to support and accelerate R&D towards commercialisation and research that does not have a credible pathway to commercialisation is unlikely to be considered of high merit.

### **3.22 What type of Projects are eligible, and what are the requirements for TRL progression and commercialisation?**

Eligible Projects must include a minimum Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of 3 at the time of Expression of Interest (EOI) and demonstrate TRL progression beyond the starting TRL during the Project. A benchmark of TRL 5 has been set to gauge when Projects are ready to progress to the commercialisation stage which could include field trials. ARENA would like to see a prototype and initial testing at TRL 3 level.

### **3.21 Could Techno Economic Assessments and development of new methods / models / data sets that can lead to more cost-effective pathways for solar in Australia be considered?**

Yes, these could be considered as part of a Project provided the Project can still meet the minimum ARENA grant funding requirements and can demonstrate sufficient merit.

## **4. Application Process**

### **4.1 How do I apply for funding?**

EOIs and Full Applications must be submitted using ARENA's Grants Management System (**GMS**). From 5 August 2025, Applicants can commence an online application by going to ARENA's online GMS, [ARENANet](#).

Each section of the online application form contains instructions on what information is required and any restrictions that may apply. Please read the help text to help you complete the Application form. Applicants can save their Application at any time before submitting to ARENA before 11:59pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT), 21 October 2025. For detailed instructions on how to use ARENA's online application portal (ARENANet), you can find the [help guides here](#) (note you must be both registered and logged into ARENA's online application portal (ARENANet portal) to access these documents).



#### **4.2 Can Expression of Interest (EOI) responses be saved in the portal and finalised at a later time?**

Yes. The portal will let you start an Application, save it and return to it later. You can also give access for others to work on the application. Refer to [ARENANet User Guide](#) for instructions (note you must be both registered and logged into ARENA's online application portal (ARENANet portal) to access this document).

#### **4.3 Can I attach documents to my application?**

Appendix A (Additional Information Requirements) of the Funding Round Announcement provides a full list of attachments required at the EOI and Full Application Stages.

Only required attachments can be submitted with the Application. All Application documents are to be submitted through ARENA's online application portal (ARENANet).

#### **4.4 If I have submitted an EOI Application before the due date, can I go back and edit the Application before the due date?**

No. We recommend that you keep the Application in draft and submit when you are satisfied with the Application responses. Please give yourself sufficient time to submit before the due date. Please email [solar@arena.gov.au](mailto:solar@arena.gov.au) if you are experiencing any technical issues with the subject line “**ULCS R&D Tech issue**”. Please note that ARENA will not be able to provide technical support after 5pm (AEDT) on the EOI Due Date.

#### **4.5 Roughly how much time is given to prepare a Full Application?**

Successful Applicants at the EOI stage will be invited to submit a Full Application. At this stage, Full Applications are expected to open in early December 2025 and closing in mid-February 2026. Refer to the ARENA Funding webpage for up-to-date timing information.

#### **4.6 Is a potential outcome of the EOI process that highly ranked Projects on similar topics will be requested to merge for a full Application?**

Each Project is assessed individually as it is a competitive round. The invitation to Full Application would be for the same Project that has been successful in the EOI. Projects that are similar will not be requested to merge.

#### **4.7 Can I submit more than one Project proposal (Application)?**

Yes, you can submit more than one Project proposal (Application). However, if you submit more than one Project proposal in each Stream, you will be competing against your other Applications. You should also consider resource allocation and capacity to deliver the multiple Project proposals.



## 5. Assessment Process

### 5.1 How does ARENA decide which Project will receive funding?

ARENA will evaluate all eligible Projects based on the four Merit Criteria outlined in the Funding Round Announcement. Each criterion will carry equal weight in the assessment process. An expert panel appointed by ARENA will conduct the scoring and ranking of Projects against these criteria. Funding will be allocated to Projects assessed as having merit, taking a portfolio approach, within the funding envelope.

### 5.2 How long will the entire process take?

Applications will be assessed once the EOI submission period has closed. It is expected Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their assessment approximately within 8 weeks from the closure of the EOI submission period. ARENA anticipates Applicants invited to submit a Full Application will then have approximately 10 weeks to prepare their Full Application. It is expected Applicants will be notified of the outcome of this assessment around early December 2025.

### 5.3 What is a portfolio approach?

When selecting Projects for funding, ARENA may consider how each Project contributes to the Program Outcomes and Round Objectives, or compliments other ARENA-funded initiatives. ARENA may choose not to fund a Project—even if it meets merit criteria—if its aims or outcomes closely align with those of previously funded or currently assessed Projects. Portfolio fit may also influence funding allocation across the Funding Round Streams. While ARENA intends to fund high-merit Projects in each Stream, funding may be reallocated if insufficient Projects in a particular Stream meet the required standard. ARENA's current portfolio of Projects is listed on its [website](#).

### 5.4 What feedback can I get on my Proposal?

ARENA will provide limited written feedback following the EOI stage to Applicants that are invited to submit a Full Application. Feedback on merit will not be provided at the EOI stage for unsuccessful Proposals. Applicants unsuccessful at the Full Application stage may request feedback from ARENA on the merit of their Full Application at the conclusion of the assessment process. Feedback will be provided in a form considered suitable by ARENA.

### 5.5 Can ARENA provide examples of previous successful Proposals from past rounds?

No, ARENA does not provide sample answers or Proposals for any of its programs. ARENA does not have standard expectations on how questions should be answered. ARENA expects all answers to be factual, clear, succinct, well justified and complete. See [list of Projects](#) from the previous ULCS R&D Round.



### **5.6 If I am invited to the Full Application stage, can I still access the EOI Applicant submission?**

Yes. After receiving an invitation to the Full Application stage, you can still access the EOI Application submission on ARENANet. Additionally, Applicants can still view their Application after submission. You will need to copy your responses from the EOI Application to the Full Application.

### **5.7 Will ARENA share information on the Panel Assessors?**

Yes. ARENA will share information on the Panel Assessors on the ARENA website in due course, and during the assessment process.

## **6. Funding and Budget**

### **6.1 How much funding can ARENA provide to my Project?**

Up to \$60 million will be invested in Projects through this Funding Round. This amount may be varied up or down at the discretion of the ARENA Board. The following funding parameters apply:

- The minimum ARENA grant for a Project in Stream 1 (Cells and Modules) is \$3.5 million.
- The minimum ARENA grant for a Project in Stream 2 (Balance of Systems, and Operation and Maintenance) is \$2.0 million.
- The maximum ARENA grant for a Project is \$10.0 million across both streams.
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### **6.2 Should the Project budget cover both the R&D and commercialisation stages?**

Yes. The Project budget should cover both the R&D and commercialisation stages.

### **6.3 How accurate does the budget for the commercialisation stage need to be?**

At the EOI stage, an indicative budget for this stage should be included in the Application, with estimated breakdown of Project cost. The budget for the R&D stage is expected to be more detailed.

### **6.4 How much funding can be directed towards commercialisation activities?**

Proposals must budget no more than 50% of total ARENA funding sought towards commercialisation activities, to a limit of \$4.0 million.

### **6.5 What can I spend ARENA grant funding on?**

Refer to the Eligible Expenditure Guide in Appendix B of the Program Guidelines for information on what the ARENA funding may and may not be used for.

### **6.6 Where is the ARENA budget template?**

The ARENA budget template can be found on the [Funding Round website](#). The template forms a mandatory attachment at the EOI stage and must be submitted with your EOI Application.





## **6.7 Is there a required level of co-investment that must be provided?**

It is expected that Projects will at least match, with a combination of cash and in-kind contributions, the ARENA grant. Projects which include a commitment of funding from sources other than ARENA may be considered of higher merit. ARENA expects that proposals closer to commercialisation will provide a higher proportion of total funds. Please refer to Merit Criterion D (Financial Viability and Co-Funding Commitment) in Part 4 (Merit Criteria) of the Program Guidelines and Section 6 (Clarification of Merit Criteria) of the Funding Round Announcement for further details around how ARENA considers the financial viability of proposed Projects.

Letters of support should clearly outline the nature of the contribution (cash or in-kind), the amount, its intended use, and any relevant terms—including timing. Letters must be on official letterhead and signed by an authorised representative who can commit to the proposed contribution.

## **6.8 How do I calculate in-kind contributions?**

In-kind contributions refer to non-cash resources provided to a Project, such as personnel time, access to facilities, equipment usage, or expert support. To calculate these, Applicants should estimate the fair market value of each contribution using internal rates or standard benchmarks. Please refer to the Eligible Expenditure Guide in Appendix B of the Program Guidelines for further details.

## **6.9 Can salary on-costs be counted as contributions?**

Yes. Salary on-costs can be calculated as an additional 25 percent of the salary and should be included as Eligible Expenditure, within the salary budget line. More information is available in the [Program Guidelines](#) under Appendix B (Eligible Expenditure Guide).

## **6.10 Will university overheads be accepted as a contribution?**

Where overheads are directly related to the Project (e.g. contract negotiation or administration costs incurred as part of the Project management) these expenses should be included as Eligible Expenditure. Where overheads are related to costs incurred in the normal course of business and do not relate directly to the Project (e.g. general administration costs for school or university services), these expenses should not be considered Eligible Expenditure. More information is available in the [Program Guidelines](#) under Appendix B (Eligible Expenditure Guide).

## **6.11 How will payments be made if my Proposal is successful?**

A payment structure is included in the Funding Agreement Template. Applicants should refer to this in the first instance. An upfront payment is expected upon Funding Agreement execution and milestone payments based on satisfaction of deliverables thereafter. Detailed Milestones and deliverables are agreed during contract negotiation after funding approval.

## **6.12 Can I amend the Funding Agreement once it has been agreed?**

ARENA notes that under certain circumstances, the Funding Agreement may need to be amended. ARENA grant recipients (Recipient) should refer to [Variation Policy](#) on <https://arena.gov.au/knowledge-bank/funding-agreement-variation-policy/>.





## 7. Technology

### 7.1 Will ARENA support tracking or fixed tilt utility scale ground mounted systems?

ARENA is interested to support innovation in any system configuration including tracking and fixed tilt.

### 7.2 In stream 1, “develop large size cells...” what does the large size mean here in this round?

Large cells refer to standard commercial sized cells (e.g. 20-21cm diameter) rather than small size cells tested in labs (e.g. 1cm diameter).

### 7.3 Is \$20 / MWh goal, the cost of solar after week-long firming?

This metric does not include the cost of firming.

### 7.4 Ultra low-cost solar panel may not be as durable as conventional solar panels. What is considered acceptable in terms of durability?

The Focus Area is about improving durability and stability of cells and modules so the Project should consider how to improve on the current durability levels and the likely impact of that improvement. Projects in the Improve Stability focus area under Stream 1 will be required to benchmark their durability levels against the ITPRV.

### 7.5 Is there a preference for the material used in the PV, such as perovskite vs silicon?

ARENA is interested in innovation in new materials including perovskite as well as existing silicon. No. There is no preference for materials. Applications in Stream 1 (Cells and modules) will need to select 1 Focus Area and address how it will consider other Focus Areas listed under Stream 1.

## 8. Knowledge Sharing

### 8.1 What are ARENA's requirements for knowledge sharing?

ARENA requires that Recipients provide insights and lessons learnt throughout the project, which will be shared with relevant audiences. This information can be shared via public reports prepared by the Recipient, public reports commissioned by ARENA or events such as webinars and workshops. The purpose of knowledge sharing is to promote collaboration and information exchange, contributing to accelerate the developments needed to achieve the decarbonisation goals.

ARENA will make all public information available in its Knowledge Bank. For all communications material distributed by Recipients in relation to the ARENA-funded Project, ARENA support must be acknowledged.

The Project knowledge sharing requirements are described in a Knowledge Sharing Plan as part of the Funding Agreement. For this Funding Round, Recipients are required under Eligibility Criterion G



(Knowledge Sharing) to agree to a defined Knowledge Sharing Plan which can be found on the RDC Program webpage on ARENA's website <https://arena.gov.au/funding>.

## **8.2 Will Project or company IP be protected under ARENA knowledge sharing requirements?**

The purpose of knowledge sharing at ARENA is to maximise Project outcomes and sharing lessons learnt for the Project to benefit stakeholders, and does not seek to obtain or dilute a Recipient's intellectual property (IP). Knowledge sharing requirements do not include any commercially valuable information or IP. It is the Recipient's responsibility to ensure that any Project documentation or information (including any Knowledge Sharing Deliverables) prepared for public release does not contain any Recipient Confidential Information. If necessary, any sensitive information not for public release may be provided as a confidential addendum for ARENA. Public deliverables must be approved by ARENA prior to publishing.



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